

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: The Use of Musically Adapted Social Stories to Build Social Skills in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Music interventions have not been identified as evidence-based, as little research of this nature has been conducted. This study explored the effectiveness of using musically adapted social skills to increase eye contact, imitation, and smiling behaviors in individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Included in the study was a control group, who received music instruction without a social stories component and an experimental group, who received music instruction including musically adapted social stories. Using an ABA intervention design, behaviors were measured using an observational approach in a sample of four individuals between the ages of eight and 12. Results were evaluated using visual inspection of the graphs, inspection of trend lines, and consideration of the percentage of non-overlapping data. All but one participant presented with an increase in at least one of the three target behaviors. One control group participant displayed a slight increase in the rate of eye contact. One participant in the experimental group displayed an upward trend in smiling behavior and the other participant in this group displayed an upward trend in imitation. For one participant in each of the groups,

the frequency of smiling behaviors was above baseline in over 50% of the observation sessions.

The frequency of imitative behaviors was above baseline in over 50% of the observations for both participants in the control group. The study was investigative in nature, therefore, future studies will need to be conducted in order to further explore the efficacy and utility of musically adapted social stories interventions in increasing eye contact, imitation, and smiling behaviors in individuals with ASD.